

A sermon delivered by Stan Lange at the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, February 8, 2009, Youth Sunday.

“Just Ask for Directions”

Preparing for today's sermon brought to my mind a book we have at home titled, *Oh, the Places You Will Go* by none other than Dr. Seuss! How many of you own or have read this book? That's great, I see some hands. I'd like to read a passage from the book to open today's sermon:

Oh, the Places You'll Go!

*Congratulations!
Today is your day.
You're off to Great Places!
You're off and away!*

*You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes
You can steer yourself
any direction you choose.
You're on your own. And you know what you know.
And YOU are the guy who'll decide where to go.*

*You'll look up and down streets. Look 'em over with care.
About some you will say, "I don't choose to go there."
With your head full of brains and your shoes full of feet,
you're too smart to go down any not-so-good street.*

*And you may not find any
you'll want to go down.
In that case, of course,
you'll head straight out of town.*

*It's opener there
in the wide open air.*

As you know, we teens grow up and move on to travel out into the world like the passage indicates. As we do, we'll visit all kinds of new places during our journey. At times, we'll feel as though we are alone on our journey to future success. In fact, we are not! God is with us all the time.

How many times have we gotten in our cars to just drive, not really knowing where we're going? Quite a few times probably. During your travels have you visited places such as Lost, Lonely, Confused, Stress or Peer Pressure?

These "places" seem to be like cities without any city limits; they just keep going and going with one city running into the next. You can drive and drive and not know where you are; nothing looks familiar; you feel alone.

Many young people today travel these roads through these cities of life and never try to understand where they are going. They don't seek directions or guidance and end up lost. As young adults traveling these roads, we need the support in finding the correct route to take and the proper guidance to stay the course. At times like these in our travels, we really need the help and encouragement in discovering the right path.

Has anyone here ever visited a place called "Source of Strength?" Some people spend their entire life searching for its location. Many search for it through the use of money, possessions, social circles or job status. It truly isn't that difficult to find. You don't even need to use one of those GPS devices like a Tom-Tom or Garmin to locate it!

All you have to do is look around you and realize that this church is a source of strength. Strength means a strong place or a stronghold. One of the meanings of source is a facility where something is available. God provides us with this church or location; a source. Jesus and his teachings provide us with the direction and encouragement; or strength.

Since we're children of God, we're each responsible for providing that source of strength by giving of ourselves and helping one another find the way regardless of our backgrounds of race, religious beliefs or creed. We each need to become a GPS or "Garmin for God"! When we make a wrong turn, "Garmin for God" says, "Turn this way to get back on course!" When we stray too far, "Garmin for God" says "Turn around and go back!" We need to share each other's source of strength to help one another find the way.

In today's New Testament reading, Paul says, "I have become all things to all people that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings."

I believe Paul is asking us to simply stop during life's travels, get out of the car and walk awhile along the streets of the world, not being afraid to ask for help and guidance or provide directions to others. God wants us to take the good news of God so seriously that we give up a bit of ourselves and our ways, step out of our cars and meet our neighbors along the way.

Paul lets us know it's okay to become like someone else for the sake of spreading God's word so that we might save some of them or help them find their way down life's road.

Now that I have shared the word of God, it's your turn to pass it on to someone else to help them find strength in God; to become all things to all people for the sake of the gospel as Paul says! Remember, just stop, get out of the car, ask for directions and become a "Garmin for God."